

School Committee Minutes  
August 19, 2008  
4:00 pm – Gleason Library Hollis Room

Present – School Committee: Chad Koski, Chair; Wendell Sykes, Vice Chair; Dale Ryder; Bill Fink, Lewis Salemy.

Present – School Administration: Marie Doyle, Superintendent; Heidi Zimmerman, Business Manager; Patrice Hurley, Principal; Joyce Mehaffey, Principal; Karen Slack, Director of Student Support Services; Claire Wilcox, Assistant to the Superintendent, David Flannery, Facilities Manager.

**Chad Koski called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm.**

**Roles and responsibilities – Glenn Koocher from the MA Association of School Committees**

Marie Doyle introduced Mr. Koocher. Mr. Koocher distributed the handbook from “Charting the Course” and then reviewed roles and responsibilities of school committee members as they relate to the community and the staff.

He stated that the SC is the legislative body for schools on a local level. The committee establishes the rules for the school district through the development of policies. The committee also hires the chief executive officer for the district, the superintendent and does not get involved in the hiring of other personnel. Through its actions the SC sets policies for the district – not always through formal policies, but also through votes and other decisions made by the committee. The SC also approves the budget for the district and can make internal changes to the budget once approved by the town.

SC members and the superintendent are considered legal public figures. This means that anyone can say whatever they wish without members and the superintendent without any penalties.

SC meetings are almost always held in public with the exception of limited reasons for executive session.

The superintendent is responsible managing the school and for hiring or overseeing the hiring and evaluation of all other personnel for the district, although the SC sets the compensation for the principals. The SC also verifies the hiring of the Special Education Director and the Business Manager. The interaction between the SC and the superintendent is a system of checks and balances. The SC sets policies and the superintendent is responsible for implementing them.

Mr. Koocher then discussed the interaction between the SC and citizens and noted that any citizen has the right to contact any School Committee member. Mr. Koocher stated

that the MASC recommends that members listen respectfully and then refer the matter to the appropriate person as confidentiality allows.

In most cases, individual members cannot be held personally liable for their actions as committee members. Only in the case of ethics violations is an individual member legally liable.

Mr. Koocher stated that it's essential for the SC and the administration to understand roles to avoid micro-management and conflicts between the two groups. Most conflicts occur when the superintendent and SC do not understand the responsibilities of the other; when people act inappropriately but not necessarily illegally; when communication is lacking; when the need to control trumps the focus on educating children; when there are budget problems.

School committees should improve the quality of instruction and promote student achievement. Teachers should come to SC meetings to describe what they do and discuss the achievement of their students.

Mr. Koocher stated that SC members make very difficult decisions and that they need to base their decisions on their conscience.

Ms. Doyle thanked Mr. Koocher for attending the meeting and sharing information with members.

### **Education Plan for Spalding**

Ms. Doyle stated that the School Building Committee has been working on enrollment projections and on the Educational Plan for the Spalding project. She distributed copies of an overview of the plan, although the full plan won't be completed until the MSBA agrees on a set of enrollment figures.

Mr. Fink noted that he SBC has been discussing a strategy for communicating the work that has been done to the public in advance of a possible fall town meeting. He also summarized the project scope, which includes replacement of Spalding and providing space for currently under-served departments, along with ongoing maintenance projects for the other buildings that will improve energy efficiency.

Ms. Doyle then summarized the educational drivers for the project:

- Primary school needs – replacement of Spalding
- Space for fine arts
- Expansion of science and technology opportunities
- English language learner requirements
- Better facilities for student support services

Mr. Fink stated that the Selectmen now have a very exhaustive report on the Highland Building. The subcommittee recommended that the building be kept where it is and that the town spend a sum of money to preserve the outside of the building so it doesn't deteriorate further while deciding the final use of the building. Ms. Ryder stated that the selectmen have clearly stated that the building and its use is completely separate from the school building project. It is expected that the decision regarding disposition of the building will go to the voters this fall.

### **Dealing with the press**

Mr. Koski stated that in the past a certain member has been designated as a spokesperson for the press, particularly the Mosquito. Ms. Ryder stated that Mr. Koski would be the best person for this. All members agreed.

### **Three-year budget projection**

Ms. Zimmerman stated that she has been working all summer on this project, but that it has not yet been finalized. Members discussed the appropriate time to present this at a meeting and the purpose of the projections. Ms. Hurley expressed concern about the timing of the budget presentation relative to the teachers and projects they have initiated.

It was decided that the 3-year budget projection would be presented at the October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. At the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting bus fees will be discussed.

### **School Committee goals**

The team discussed improving communication about what's going on at the school as a goal. Some of the current tools include the Buzz, the website, emails from teachers. Ms. Ryder mentioned that the budget mailer was very well received. Some members stated that they felt the existing tools are sufficient and working well. Others felt that additional tools were needed. Ms. Ryder also stated that she thinks that often people don't attend meetings because they aren't interested.

Ms. Doyle stated that the students will be participating in CCTV this year and producing news shows four times this year. A tech fair will also be held.

Mr. Fink proposed that working on communication issues be a goal this year.

Mr. Salemy suggested improving accountability and transparency would be a good goal. He stated that the 3-year budget, and the work with high school preparedness support this.

Mr. Fink suggested determining cost saving initiatives that might be carried out through the school.

Mr. Koski stated that he would like to see the “presume good intent” project continued this year.

Ms. Ryder suggested that each member assume responsibility for a goal as a point person.

Another suggested goal would be to tweak the superintendent evaluation process.

These goals will be discussed again at the next meeting.

### **District Goals**

Ms. Doyle discussed the draft District Goals for the year. She noted that the District Goals would be tied into the School Improvement Plan and the DCAP. The District Goals consist of 6 broad goals as follows:

- Maximize student learning
- Build a community of respect in a safe and healthy learning environment
- Assess the effectiveness of the curriculum
- Create a comprehensive strategic plan
- Integrate technology
- Meet space needs and manage the resources of the Carlisle Public Schools

Ms. Doyle briefly discussed what would be covered under each goal.

Mr. Fink asked about vertical articulation between the Carlisle School and the high school and wondered if our students are prepared for the high school. Mr. Salemy stated that he has been working with Ms. Rigby on this issue. CCHS representatives will be attending the October 1<sup>st</sup> School Committee meeting to discuss this.

Ms. Mehaffey and Ms. Hurley discussed initiatives they will be leading regarding the reduction of bullying.

Mr. Sykes asked for details regarding the assessment process and how teachers share the results of the assessment process.

Ms. Doyle stated that the long term comprehensive strategic plan should be tied to the 3-year budget projection.

Ms. Doyle discussed improvements in math skills due to the use of FasttMath in the first grade. She stated that Shawna Horgan has actual test results that show improvement over skills developed without the software. It was agreed that Ms. Horgan would be invited to the September 17th meeting to discuss the program.

### **School Committee meeting organization**

Ms. Wilcox distributed the format currently used for school committee meetings and members discussed possible changes.

Ms. Ryder suggested that whenever there are guests at the meeting, they be scheduled at the beginning of the meeting. She also stated that there is a certain amount of repetition of material that's already been distributed. She would like to streamline the review of documents when members have reviewed documents and use the meetings for discussion rather than bringing members up to speed whenever possible.

Mr. Salemy stated that there is not enough time generally for substantive discussions.

Mr. Koski suggested moving the superintendent's report to the end of the meeting.

Ms. Ryder noted that the administrator reports are of the most interest to her and others and would like to have those reports near the beginning of the meeting. These reports should be more topical rather than just a listing of events that have occurred. They should include a discussion of how events impact students.

Ms. Ryder also stated that the committee reports should also include just a couple of topics, which would be discussed in detail.

Communications/correspondence will be moved later in the meeting along with the superintendent report.

### **Superintendent evaluation process/goals**

Ms. Ryder stated that she would like to suggest that the evaluation process have both a fall and spring component. One or more members would meet with the superintendent in the fall for feedback and discussion. This would supplement the formal spring evaluation process. She stated that the goals do not align with the evaluation form and process and that this should be rectified.

Mr. Fink asked if the process should be completely revised. Discussion followed and Ms. Ryder stated that she thought the evaluation form used was effective and comprehensive, but that the goal-setting process and how the goals tie into the evaluation was lacking.

Mr. Koski stated that he liked the idea of meeting in the November or December timeframe with Ms. Doyle in addition to the spring. The entire committee would meet with Ms. Doyle to do an evaluation update in the fall.

Members discussed the process used last year. Ms. Ryder stated that she would like a fair and honest assessment done respectfully. Members would like to meet in executive session with the superintendent as a committee to discuss individual evaluation comments and to agree on a summarized final evaluation.

Members agreed that the November evaluation would involve just an executive session discussion and no written report.

The form used last year was discussed briefly and members agreed that the form was a good one and that the scale would be changed to reflect more gradations in performance.

Mr. Salemy asked if there might be a way to tie the superintendent performance to MCAS scores or some other objective measure.

Members suggested having Ms. Doyle's goals be the District Goals with the addition of a goal to continue the organizational review process, including the continuation of the superintendent advisory group meetings. The committee will discuss her goals further at the next meeting.

The following action steps need to be addressed:

- The form and any changes required in the form
- Finalization of goals for the year

Ms. Ryder stated that two members should work on the form and the goals and then bring the changes to a future meeting. Ms. Ryder and Mr. Fink will take this on working with Ms. Doyle. They will have this ready to present at the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **SC EDCO representative**

Ms. Wilcox stated that she had received a phone call from EDCO asking who the School Committee representative would be for the year. Mr. Sykes will be the Carlisle representative for the year.

Ms. Wilcox will check on the dates for "Charting the Course" and will get the dates and locations to Mr. Fink and Mr. Salemy.

### **Action item: vote acceptance of \$4,000 donation from the Nichols Foundation**

Ms. Doyle stated that some of the funds this year would be used to add coffee and tea making equipment to the teachers' rooms. The res

Mr. Fink made a motion to accept with gratitude the gift of \$4000 from the Nichols Foundation. Ms. Ryder seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

### **Executive Session**

At 8:25 Mr. Sykes made a motion to enter executive session to discuss to discuss a personnel issue (reason 1). He further stated that the meeting would return to open session. Mr. Fink seconded the motion and all members voted in favor: Mr. Sykes, yes; Mr. Koski, yes; Mr. Fink, yes; Ms. Ryder, yes; Mr. Salemy, yes.

The meeting returned to open session at 8:30 pm.

**Action item: vote superintendent salary for fiscal 2009**

Mr. Fink made a motion to set the superintendent's salary at \$ 143,159.65 for fiscal year 2009. Ms. Ryder seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

At 8:32 Mr. Sykes made a motion to enter executive session to discuss to discuss a personnel issue (reason 1). He further stated that the meeting would not return to open session. Mr. Fink seconded the motion and all members voted in favor: Mr. Sykes, yes; Mr. Koski, yes; Mr. Fink, yes; Ms. Ryder, yes; Mr. Salemy, yes.